

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PSC: CONSUMERS SHOULD PREPARE NOW TO LESSEN IMPACT  
OF HIGHER NATURAL GAS PRICES DURING WINTER**

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Public Service Commission recommends that residents take measures now to lessen heating bills for the approaching winter.

“Commodity prices for natural gas have been high this summer due to lower than average storage levels,” First District PSC Commissioner Frank Landis of Lincoln said, “While storage levels are gradually catching up to the five-year average, consumers should take measures to moderate home heating bills this winter.”

“Lower cost gas stored during the summer is normally drawn out of storage during the winter to lessen winter spikes in natural gas prices. The increase in natural gas-fired electric generation during the summer at the same time natural gas companies are buying gas to inject for winter use has caused pressure on prices,” Landis said.

The Nebraska Legislature last spring gave the Public Service Commission regulatory control over several aspects of private natural gas companies serving Nebraska communities. The Nebraska Public Service Commission, however, does not regulate the commodity price of natural gas.

“Nebraska gas companies are entitled to recover the cost of natural gas purchased for delivery to customers,” Landis said. “This cost is often referred to as a ‘pass through’ because the companies do not profit on the commodity cost of the gas.”

The Commission recommends several measures that consumers can take to lower their home heating bills this winter. Among those measures are:

- Keep thermostat adjustments to a minimum: Frequent adjustments to a heating thermostat waste energy and money. For each degree that the thermostat is set above 68 degrees, a consumer will increase heating costs by three percent. At night, turn the thermostat down at least five degrees.
- Check furnace filters regularly: Check the furnace filters at least once a month. Clean filters also keep the air in the home cleaner and help limit the need for equipment maintenance.

- Conserve water use: Bathing, dishwashing, and clothes washing are everyday routines. All of these activities, however, cost more in winter because the water in the home's pipes is colder and takes longer to heat. Follow these tips:
  - Fix water leaks. One drip a second adds up to about 75 gallons a month.
  - Insulate pipes where possible and practical to limit heat loss.
  - Operate dishwashers, clothes washers, and dryers only when fully loaded.
  - Don't use a water level or temperature higher than necessary for a load of clothes.
  - Use a stopper in the sink so hot water won't be running constantly while shaving or washing dishes by hand.
  - Install a new showerhead with a flow restrictor.
- Make seasonal adjustments to living habits: Watch television or read in the warmest room in the house. Move chairs away from windows or outside walls. Close off rooms that are not being used. On sunny days, open window coverings such as drapes and let the sun's heat help keep the home warm. At night and on dark wintry days, use window coverings to help insulate window areas.

Landis said Nebraskans can also reduce their monthly energy costs by putting their homes in the best condition possible to contain escaping energy. Some recommendations are:

- Improve insulation. This can save more energy and money on home heating than anything. Complete insulation information is available from hardware stores, lumber outlets, and insulation dealers.
- Consider installing storm windows and doors. Make temporary storm windows by tacking, stapling, or taping clear plastic to the inside or outside of windows and screen doors.
- Make sure doors and windows are properly weather stripped. In a pinch, strips may be cut the necessary width and tacked on. The rubber is a good protector and usually lasts longer than felt weather stripping.
- Caulk around windows and door frames. Replace cracked, brittle, and loose caulking replaced. Latex caulking costs a little more, but that is because it usually lasts longer.
- Replace loose or cracked putty around window panes.
- Cover window air conditioners.

- Seal an attic fan with heavy plastic or vinyl. However, make sure attic vents are open because they allow moisture to escape. If moisture accumulates in the attic, it will greatly decrease the effectiveness of the insulation.

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